



LGBTQA+ Inclusion

Glossary of terms

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Introduction

This Glossary of Terms document has been developed to support our community to have sensitive and constructive conversations regarding LGBTQA+ equality and inclusion. This Glossary of Terms should be used alongside our inclusion and allyship booklets to aid your learning and development on LGBTQA+ identities and inclusion.

It is important to remember that language is complex and ever changing. Individuals may have preferences on language on how to describe their identity and experiences that may not match this document and it is important that self-identification should always take precedence. Staff and students should be supported to use the language that best describes their own identity and experience.

We welcome your feedback on the Glossary of Terms and any other terms you think it would be helpful for us to include. Please contact hr-equality@qmul.ac.uk with your feedback or comments.

Glossary of Terms

Ace - Ace is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, [asexual](#), [aromantic](#), [demisexual](#), [demiromantic](#) and [grey-A](#).

Acephobia - is a term used to describe the fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about people who are or are perceived to be ace.

Ace-erasure - The denial that asexuality and/or aromanticism is real, and the invisibility and lack of representation of asexuality and aromanticism. Examples include dismissing, ignoring, or trying to explain away asexuality/aromanticism.

Acquired gender - A legal term used in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. It is defined as the gender that a person who is applying for a gender recognition certificate (GRC) has lived in for two years and intends to continue living in. This term is generally not used within the trans community and many people prefer to refer to gender/gender identity.

Ally - Allyship is about being an active and ongoing supporter and champion in solidarity with a marginalised group of people, such as [LGBTQA+](#) people.

Anyone can engage in LGBTQA+ allyship and seek to be a better ally: 'straight' people can be allies to LGBTQA+ people, and LGBTQA+ people can be allies to each other. An ally is someone who supports and champions LGBTQA+ people and rights; educates themselves and others on the importance of and work required to achieve equality and inclusion for LGBTQA+ people; and challenges homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

However, it is important to note that allyship is not simply an identity, and it cannot be self-defined. It is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with marginalised people. This work must be recognised by the people we seek to ally ourselves with.

Allies can play an important role in helping to create a safe, inclusive and celebratory environment for everyone to be able to be themselves at work.

Aromantic - Someone who does not experience romantic attraction.

Asexual - Someone who is asexual does not experience sexual attraction to anyone.

Bi - Bi is an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, [pan](#) and queer identities.

Biphobia - The fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

Cisgender/Cis - Someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex, and gender, they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

Coming Out – When a person first tells someone/others about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Deadnaming - Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition. This is an example of transphobia.

Demisexual - Someone who only experiences sexual attraction after developing a strong emotional bond with someone.

Demiromantic - Someone who is only romantically attracted to those they have emotionally bonded with first.

Gay – Can refer to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards men. Also, a generic term for lesbian, gay and queer sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Gender- is complicated and is often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity. Gender is largely culturally determined and is often assumed to ‘match’/align with the sex assigned at birth (for example, someone assigned male at birth is generally also assigned the gender of boy/man, while someone assigned female at birth is assigned the gender girl/woman). Gender often refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men and the roles, relationships and norms associated with them.

Gender dysphoria – used to describe when a person experiences discomfort and anxiety because their gender identity does not align with their sex/gender assigned at birth. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn’t feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth. Some people may not use this term as it can medicalise trans identities. Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria.

Gender expression - how a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender, for example through their appearance and behaviour. A person who does not conform to societal expectations of gender may not, however, identify as trans.

Gender identity - a person's innate sense of their own gender, their internal sense of self, which may or may not align with the sex (and related gender) they were assigned at birth.

For trans people, their own internal gender identity does not align with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth (for example, a trans woman could be a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman). Unlike gender expression (see above), gender identity is not visible to others. People have the right to self-identify their gender, and many people reject the whole idea of a gender binary (man/woman), and describe themselves with terms such as non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid (see non-binary definition).

Gender reassignment – the legal term used in the Equality Act 2010 to describe the protected characteristic of anyone who ‘proposes to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex’ (Equality Act, 2010).

This is the protected characteristic that protects transgender people (referred to in the Equality Act as transsexual people) from discrimination, victimisation and harassment in employment, education and when using services. Importantly, the act requires no medical treatment or interventions for a transgender person to be afforded protection.

Grey-A - Someone who may experience sexual attraction very rarely or only under specific circumstances.

Grey-romantic - Someone who only experiences romantic attraction very rarely.

Heterosexual/Straight - Refers to someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to someone of the opposite gender. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Homosexual – This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards someone of the same gender. The term ‘gay’ is now more generally used.

Homophobia – The fear or dislike of someone, based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, gay or bi people. Homophobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bi.

Intersex - an intersex person is born with ambiguous genitalia and/or sex chromosomal variations, making it difficult to classify their biological sex as either male or female at birth. There are many different intersex conditions. An intersex person may self-identify as male, female or non-binary.

Lesbian – Refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Lesbophobia - The fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian. Lesbophobic bullying may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian.

LGBTQA+ - The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi and trans, queer and asexual/ace.

Non-binary - an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with the binary of ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Some non-binary people may identify with some aspects of binary identities (e.g. they may feel they embody some elements of masculinity or femininity or both), while others reject them entirely. Rather than he or she, non-binary people may use gender-neutral [pronouns](#) such as: they, per, zie or fey; and the title Mx may be preferred to Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms. The term intersex (referring to sex) is not interchangeable with non-binary (referring to gender).

Orientation – Orientation is an umbrella term describing a person's attraction to other people. This attraction may be sexual (sexual orientation) and/or romantic (romantic orientation). These terms refer to a person's sense of identity based on their attractions, or lack thereof. Orientations include, but are not limited to, lesbian, gay, bi, ace and straight.

Outed – When a lesbian, gay, bi, trans or ace person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent.

Pan – Refers to a person who's romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

Passing - If trans person is regarded, at a glance, to be a cisgender man or cisgender woman.

Pronouns - A pronoun is a word used to refer to a person in place of their name. The most common third-person identifying pronouns are she/her and he/him, but many people choose to use different gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them, ze/hir/hirs and ze/zem/xyrs or to be referred to by their first name instead of a pronoun.

Queer – Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity and more broadly by the LGBTQA+ community. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBTQA+ community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBTQA+ people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

Sex – is assigned to people at birth based on their physical characteristics such as their primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. The sex assigned at birth is usually male or female, but people who cannot easily be classified in this way are referred to as intersex (see definition above). Sometimes the terms sex and gender are used interchangeably but this should be avoided where possible (see definition of gender and gender identity above).

Sexual orientation - is about who you're attracted to and who you feel drawn to either romantically, emotionally, and/or sexually.

Questioning – The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Transitioning - the steps a trans person may take to live fully in the gender with which they identify. Everybody's transition is different, involving different stages and over different time periods.

Transitioning can include:

- Social transition: changing your name, pronouns, appearance, and living as a person of your gender.
- Legal transition: changing your legal name and gender.
- Medical transition: using procedures such as hormone treatments or surgery to change your body to align with your gender identity.

Not everybody will do all or any of the steps above, but that does not invalidate their gender. It is important to note that transitioning does not mean someone's gender identity has changed. The person still has the same identity post transition; instead, they may have changed various aspects of their life to bring these in line with their identity.

Transphobia – Transphobia is unlawful prejudice against trans people, it may be realised through acts of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

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